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THE

FATAL MARRIAGE.

A DRAMA

BY J. H. W. STAM BOOK AND P. C. FINE

ATLANTA, GA.

THE ATLANTA STEAM BOOK AND P. C. FINE

1875.

THE
FATAL MARRIAGE.

A DRAMA.

By the Author of "The Tyrant of New Orleans."

ATLANTA, GA.:
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NOTE.—The name and leading features of the plot of this Drama, the reader will at once perceive, are taken from one of La Sage's tales, in *Gil Blas*. He will also find that its Author has made free use of the original, both in thought and expression.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Prince Enriquez.

The Infante Don Pedro, } Nephews of King Roger.
brother of Enriquez, }

Leontio Seffredi, Prime Minister of King Roger.

Blanche, daughter of Leontio Seffredi.

Princess Constantia, daughter of Matilda, a deceased
sister of King Roger.

Don Jerome De Silva, Duke of Palermo.

Don Pedro Pinares.

Don Alfonso, a friend of Enriquez.

Don Alva, commander of the Castle at Palermo.

Don Miguel, commander of Horse.

Nisa, a female attendant of Blanche.

Jose, servant of Leontio Seffredi.

Archbishop of Palermo, and two Bishops.

Others of the nobility and subjects, officers of the
realm,

Soldiers and servants.

SCENE—Sicily. At and near Palermo.

THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—Belmonte, Castle of Leontio Seffredi. Enriquez enters Blanche's apartment by a secret passage and finds her in tears.

ENRIQUEZ. Dearest Blanche! tears and not smiles
thy greeting?

What grief hath cast this shadow on thy face?

Speak, I pray thee, and my suspense relieve;

To my confidence thy secret entrust.

Art thou not happy in our plighted love?

Wouldst thou the cause of thy sorrow conceal?

BLANCHE. To hide from thee my fears, were, indeed, vain.

The King, thy uncle, lies at point of death,
And the sceptre he wields may soon be thine.

When I think of the distance betwixt us

This turn of fortune's wheel may interpose,

Misgivings my anxious bosom disturb.

The monarch and the lover may then part;

'Tis this thought that makes me sad; hence these tears.

ENR. That thy fears are real, tho' without cause.

Thy tears attest, and also assure me,

If assurance were needed, of thy love.

But these fears uncheck'd doubts may engender,

And doubts, indulg'd too free, suspicion breed,

Which feeds and grows on its own fantasies,

'Till it unsettles faith and constancy.

No, Blanche; I never shall forsake thee;

Without thee, royalty would have no charm;

My crown-jewel thou shalt be; none other

Of such beauty e'er grac'd a monarch's brow.

BLANCHE. Ah! my lord; the crown once plac'd on
thy head,

For a princess Queen thy subjects may ask,

Whose noble alliance new realms may join

To thy estates by hereditary right.

Alas ! inspired by their ambitious aims,
Thy oft repeated vows may be forgot.

ENR. Nay ; why with this phantom torment thyself ?
Should the worst befall the King, and the crown
Of Sicily descend to me, I do swear,
At Palermo my vows I will redeem,
And to the altar lead thee, my sweet bride.

BLANCHE. My lord, this weakness forgive and forget ;
Thoughts unbidden often our minds distract,
Like the spectre forms which haunt our dreams,
But in our waking hours vanish away.
It were cruel thy constancy to doubt,
Though tempted by ambition's prize.

ENR. Forgive thee ! that would imply offense,
Which thou hast not given ; nor will I forget,
But treasure these tears as another pledge
Of thy love, and of a happy future.
And now, what report of the King ?

BLANCHE. A message from father, at Palermo,
Represents the King in sad condition ;
His case is hopeless ; he may be now dead.

ENR. Humanity, but not the ties of blood,
Bids me pity the King ; these he himself,
With his own hand long ago disrupted.
True, my father the standard of revolt
Against him did raise, and shook his throne ;
But to the dungeon he added torture,
Incited by his sister, Matilda.
I owe him nothing ;—in his extremity,
Propriety demands I say no more.

(Noise at the Castle gate.)

BLANCHE—Away, my lord, in haste, my father comes.

ENR. My love, adieu ;
Let no further doubts thy bosom disturb.
Honors, power, all that rank can bestow ;
The wealth of kingdoms is too beggarly
To win my thoughts from thee ; without thy love
All these would be to me a mere bauble,
A poor, paltry pageant of royalty. (*Exit ENR.*)

BLANCHE, (*Sola.*) To doubt thee now !
That would prove myself most unworthy
Of thy precious love.

SCENE 11.—The same. Apartments of Enriquez in Seffredi's castle.

Enter Leontio Seffredi, Blanche, and Enriquez.

SEFFREDI. I come, my lord, the bearer of sad news.
Thy uncle, the King, is dead ; the event,
Though it be a shock to thy kind nature,
Hath brought with it that which lightens the blow.
By his death a sceptre comes to thy hands.
Sicily is now at thy feet ; I come,
Commissioned by the nobility, to say,
They await thy orders at Palermo.
With my daughter I first pay thee homage.

ENR. The tidings thou has brought is no surprise.
Of the King's malady I have been warned ;
And though by blood entitled to the crown,
Now, that it is offer'd to me by free will
Of them, whose interests are deepest concern'd,
The gravity of the event fills my mind
With thoughts of serious import. To be King ;
Govern a State, is next to divine rule ;
Consummate wisdom, patience and mercy,—
These are virtues, rare as they are great.
With power, it is easy to play the tyrant,
And with gilded pomp gloss the foulest crimes ;
But with even hand to deal out justice to all ;
The laws enforce ; peace and order maintain ;
In fine, a Sovereign's whole duty perform,
And belov'd by all, wear a crown in peace,
Is no small part on the world's stage to play.
But wise Leontio, thou hast been thus far
My friend ; I should rather say, a father ;
Thou hast been my best, safest counsellor ;
Be so still ; by thy help, I hope to wield
The sceptre for the good of my subjects,
And mine own glory. (Advances to a standish and
takes up a blank sheet of paper on which he sub-
scribes his name at the foot.)

SEFF. My lord, pray what is the meaning of this ?

ENR. My friend, I would show thee my gratitude ;
(hands paper to Blanche)

And to thee, fidelity to my vows ;
Accept, dear Blanche, this my own sign-manual,
This new pledge of my love, and of the empire
Over my heart thy matchless charms have won.

BLANCHE (receiving the paper)—

Think me not ungrateful, most gracious prince,
 If I commit this token of esteem
 To my father's discretion, who alone
 Has my destiny in charge.

(Hands paper to her father.)

SEFF. For the confidence thus reposed in me,
 Your majesty shall not reproach himself,

ENR. My dear Leontio, use the parchment
 As it pleaseth thee ; thy words shall be mine,
 To bind me to what thou wouldst have me do.
 With dispatch now to Palermo return ;
 For my coronation at once prepare ;
 And assure my subjects of my coming,
 To receive their pledge of allegiance,
 And my pledge of protection in return. [Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—Palermo. King's Palace. Coronation Hall.

(Flourish of trumpets without.)

(Enters the Archbishop of Palermo, bearing the crown between two Bishops who carry in either hand golden candlesticks, with lighted tapers, and are followed by Prince Enriquez, the Infante, Don Pedro, Princess Constantia, the Constable of Sicily, Duke of Palermo, Don Alfonso, nobility and subjects. Enriquez ascends the throne with Princess Constantia, whom he salutes. He seats himself in the coronation chair, the Princess taking a less elevated seat.)

SEFFREDI. (opening a sealed paper package.) As chancellor of the kingdom, it is my place to present the last will and testament of his most illustrious majesty, our late King, and to read its contents, touching the succession of the crown. (Reads) "In default of issue, it is my will and pleasure, and by virtue of my sovereign power and authority, I do hereby ordain and direct that my nephew, Prince Enriquez, son of my deceased brother Manfroi, shall be my successor on the throne of Sicily, and that he inherit all my possessions and the royal dignities and powers belonging and appertaining to said Kingdom ; and I do enjoin upon my most faithful subjects submission and allegiance to his authority ; upon condition, nevertheless, that he do marry the Princess Constantia, daughter of my deceased sister, Matilda ; and in the event that he refuses her hand, the crown to devolve,

to his exclusion, on the head of the Infante, Don Pedro, upon like condition."

My lords, that pious and most excellent Prince has consented to accept the crown on this condition, and he is ready to honor the Princess Constantia with——

ENR. (Interrupting him.) Hast thou forgotten the paper?

SEFF. My lord, here it is. (Exhibiting the paper.) The nobility of the kingdom will see by your subscription the esteem you have for the Princess, and your respect for the will of the late King. (Reads.)

"Be it known to the nobility and subjects of the Kingdom of Sicily, that I accept the condition of my succession to the crown, contained in the will of the late King, which requires me to marry my most excellent cousin, the Princess Constantia; and in attestation thereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my seal."

(Signed) ENRIQUEZ.

(Received with shouts of applause.)

CONSTANTIA. (Rising from her seat.)
The honor thou hast conferred upon me
I accept with gratitude.

ENR. Your gratitude, madam, does me honor;
(greatly agitated.)
Pray be seated.

(Approaching Seffredi.)

(Aside) Leontio,
What meanest thou? For such uses as this,
My sign-manual was not given thee,
SEFFREDI. (Aside.) My lord, I know it;
Wilt thou, by thy rashness, lose a kingdom?

ENR. (Turning to Constantia.) This ordeal, cousin,
Is new to me; and if, perchance, I seem
Not myself, lay it to the occasion;
To such formalities I am unus'd.

(Enter Blanche and Don Alfonso. Prince Enriquez
sees her and becomes more agitated.)
The injunction of our uncle's last will,
That you should share the crown shall be fulfill'd.

(Takes her hand.)

(Seffredi holding Blanche by the hand approaches
the throne.)

SEFF. (Presenting Blanche and addressing her.)
Thy homage to the Queen,
And upon her head invoke the blessings

Of a happy marriage and prosperous reign.

(Blanche's agitation alarms her father who manages to get her out of the Hall. The Archbishop advances and hands the Prince the Holy Bible; the Prince takes the oath.)

PR. ENR. In the presence of God, I promise my people to defend and honor our holy religion as it becomes a Christian King and son of the Church; to cause justice to be done to all of my subjects; finally, to govern them in conformity to the laws of the kingdom, which I swear to observe, so help me God and his Holy Gospel. (Kisses the Book. The Archbishop places the crown upon the Prince's head, anoints him and blesses him.)

ARCHBISHOP. May the Holy Virgin and her son Jesus, now crown his majesty with heaven's diadem, and give him strength to perform the vows which he has so solemnly made, and, in a special manner his vow to defend the most Holy Catholic Church.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—The same. Apartments in the King's Palace.

Enter King Enriquez.

KING ENR. (Solus.) O, fool that I was, to be thus deceived!

Worse than fool; coward! aye, a miscreant!

Marry Constantia! true, she is comely,

And of royal blood, but her smiles even,

Giving token of the joy she might feel,

Would pierce my heart like poisoned daggers.

'Mid scenes that ravish other men's senses,

Would appear my father's ghost to rebuke

And shame me, his most unnatural son.

And dearest Blanche! what are her thoughts of me?

To act so base a part. (Enter Don Alfonso.)

My good friend;

How untoward have this day's issues been!

Leontio's subtle craft hath betrayed me

To do what I would give worlds to recall.

Into his snare he drew me so dextrously,

That I scarcely knew it till it was done.

Accurs'd be the hour when I trusted him

With my signature.

DON A. To be thus used, indeed, surprised me.

KING ENR. Thou know'st how a child its parents' word

Obeys without question, or act of will;
 To his authority thus accustom'd,
 As by instinct, my judgment I did yield.
 By the spur of the moment I was prick'd ;
 My thoughts, with due speed, I could not collect;
 But to entrust him with my sign-manual,
 That was the fatal mistake.

DON A. The pledge thou gavest to wed Constantia
 Was most unfortunate.

KING ENR. True; but a pledge I will not redeem.
 A promise obtain'd by cunning and fraud,
 On the conscience hath no force nor effect;
 My promise being thus gained, I'm released
 From its performance.

DON A. Thou art right; I would not be bound by it.

KING ENR. And to be wrought on thus, my own
 manhood

Forbids; though my kingdom had been the price,
 He had no right my hand thus to barter.

DON A. But what remedy hast thou now?

KING ENR. I shall at once withdraw my acceptance
 Of the crown, on the condition annex'd,
 And claim it by right of inheritance.

At the time, this purpose entered my mind,—
 To undo that which was then being done,
 Which gain'd my seeming assent to the terms.
 To act this deceit nearly palsied my tongue;
 To thus appear so false to the one I loved;
 In her presence, to another offer
 The hand which by my plighted faith was her's;
 O, 'tis this thought that points my self-reproach.
 For this cruel wrong, atonement should be made;
 It shall be made though it cost me my crown.

To her I will go, and forgiveness ask.
 Her gentle heart, I am sure, will grant it.
 In my attempt to retrieve this false step
 I see the dangers that will confront me.
 Leontio's influence at court hath been great:—
 With King Roger it was omnipotent.

When my purpose is known, as 'twill soon be,
 His friends will espouse his cause against me.
 They must, therefore, be divested of power,
 And give place to those who will follow me,
 And are ready to link their fate with mine.
 To confer with you on this grave matter
 Is my wish, and to this end your presence

At an early hour will oblige; to-night
I leave the palace; at the postern gate
My horse awaits me; on my return here
I will send for thee.

DON A. 'Tis enough to know your majesty's will,
To obey it.

KING ENR. Till then adieu. (*Exeunt.*)

ACT III.

SCENE 1.—Belmont. Apartment in Seffredi's Castle.

Enter Seffredi and Blanche.

SEFFREDI. My child, I have a word to say to thee
Which thy state of mind while at the King's palace,
And on our way homeward, forbade me.
Thy love for the King has not escap'd me.
If proof had been wanting the opinion
To confirm, thy conduct in his presence,
Which his coronation well nigh marred,
Was sufficient every doubt to dispel.
My daughter, it is a father's duty
To tell thee that this passion is most vain;
Aye, if longer indulg'd, will prove fatal.
Between the King and thyself lies a gulf,
Which without thy disgrace cannot be pass'd;
Banish the thought; the delusive hope dispel,
Or it will prove to thee a treach'rous snare;
Besides, thy hand is already pledged.

BLANCHE. To whom?

SEFF. To the Constable.

BLANCHE. Father!

SEFF. True.

BLANCHE. Just Heaven!

What sorrows thou hast held in store for Blanche!

(She falls into her father's arms, who places her on
a sofa and applies restoratives.)

(Recovering.) My lord, pardon this weakness; 'tis
over.

But ere long death's welcome hand will rid thee
Of one who ventured on the sea of love
Without a parent's counsel for her chart.

SEFF. No, Blanche; the sacrifice would be too dear
Virtuous resolve its lawful empire
Will assert, and make thee thyself again,
Arm thee with the power to overcome

The storm of passion which now would wreck thee.
 A worthy offer is the Constable's hand,
 An alliance of which thou mightst well be proud.
 He is young, handsome; all know his valor,
 And that through his veins courses noble blood.

BLANCHE. Oft have I heard of his many virtues;
 'Tis not my pride that would reject his hand;
 That it would not degrade me I am sure,
 But the King's vows, repeated o'er and o'er—

SEFF. That thou wouldst speak, I already know.
 If the Prince's vows to thee could be fulfill'd,
 To me it would be a most joyful event;
 But that is impossible; the welfare
 Of the realm, its peace and safety demand
 That he accept the hand of the Princess—
 On this condition only is he King.
 Wouldst thou have him resign a throne for thee?
 To see thee suffer thus makes my heart bleed.
 Yet, what madness against fate to contend?
 Besides, thy good repute may be tarnish'd
 By evil-tongued rumor, if this passion
 Thy bosom should continue to inflame.
 The King has decided between thy charms
 And a throne, by accepting Constantia.
 To the Constable I have pledged thy hand;
 That pledge, cost what it may, shall be redeem'd.
 If persuasion should prove of no avail,
 Unwilling as I am, I will assert
 A parent's authority, command thee.
 And to avoid delay, the Constable
 Will come to-night to claim thee as his bride.

BLANCHE. O, father, why this haste? Let me, I pray,
 At least, be spar'd time my mind to compose
 For the trial I have to undergo,
 The dread ordeal of giving away
 My hand without my heart; do grant me this;
 Not to-night; let sweet sleep quiet my nerves,
 And to my heart its natural beat restore
 Ere to the altar I'm unwilling led.

SEFF. No, no! delay will accomplish no good.
 A life's long experience hath taught me this;—
 To do that which it is painful to do,
 It had best be done quick; reasons of State,
 Besides, demand that this night thy marriage
 Take place. So, prepare for the ceremonial
 In our private chapel. (*Exit Seffredi.*)

BLANCHE. (Sola.) Is this a dream?
 Or is 't reality? My hopes all dead;
 Doom'd to a life of wretchedness and woe!
 By my own father! for reasons of State!
 O, Heaven, save me! from this fate save me!
 Marry the Constable! Compared to this
 Death is sweet, sweet as the child's gentle sleep;
 And Enriquez, where now are thy pledges?
 The vows thou didst swear to keep? all broken!
 Perfidious Prince, to deceive me thus!
 To lead me over a pathway of flowers
 To the dizzy edge of a yawning chasm!
 May the chalice thou hast put to thy lips,
 Polluted by the basest treachery,
 With noxious poison infect thy heart's blood!
 May thy nuptial couch be a bed of thorns,
 Thy soul to lacerate with jealousy,
 With hideous dreams and waking horrors!
 May the caresses, which to endearment
 Now invite thee, prove to be serpent's folds!
 To 'venge me on myself for my folly,
 In giving ear to thy faithless promises.
 I will wed the Constable, though shrinking
 From his chilling touch. I will rival thee,
 Traitor, in the horrors of our nuptials.
 If in thy heart thou hast a spark of love,
 To me, it will be revenge enough to appear
 Before thee, another's devoted bride,
 Or victim. If thou hast forgotten me,
 With thy vows, Sicily may at least boast
 Of a woman who could punish herself
 For having too unwisely loved. [Exit.

SCENE 2,—The same. Ante-room in Blanche's apartments.

(Enter Nisa.)

NISA. (Sola) My poor, dear mistress!
 Oh, why did she consent to wed a man
 She did not love? It will break her heart.

(Enter Jose.)

JOSE. That's the way with you women; heart-break-
 ing,
 To hear you talk, is a daily business;
 But I have never yet seen the pieces
 Of the precious ware; it is soon mended,
 I trow.

NISA. Jose;
I was not speaking to you, nor of you, sir ;
You are impertinent.

JOSE. That may be; and if 'twere my only sin,
I would have but little use for a priest.
Don't be so touchy; I, too, have a heart.

NISA. I doubt it.

JOSE. You might as well doubt my love.

NISA. Your love! What's the matter with you Jose?

JOSE. Heart disease; palpitation of the heart.

NISA. Palpitation of the heart!

What causes your heart to palpitate?

JOSE. If I tell you your confessor will know it.

NISA. That is my business, sir.

JOSE. It might get Jose into business.

The old fellow looks a little cross-eyed
At me, as it is.

NISA. Cease this profanity; but tell me, Jose, What makes your heart palpitate?—out with it.

JOSE.

Nisa.

Art thou in earnest? Hast thou an interest
In the workings of this poor heart of mine?
Then, of all men I am the happiest;
Then, brightest sunshine leaps into my soul,
Kindling into melting heat all its fires;
Then, I feel as if upon angel's wings,
Upward borne, the sun's planets I pass
Into azure fields, near heaven's bright walls,
And list to the songs of its inspir'd choir,
Wafted on the breeze o'er its battlements,
Where cherubim and seraphim—

NISA. Merciful Heavens !

Jose, what ails you? have you gone crazy?

JOSE. Why thus interrupt me, and clip the wings
Of my imagination in its flight
Through the starry concave?

NISA. Where did you get your poetry, Jose?

JOSE. Love's inspiration.

NISA. You in love?

JOSE. Yes, I am in love.

NISA. With whom?

JOSE. I love the flower that "scents the evening
gale,"

Or sparkles in the morning dew ;
The flower may droop, its beauty fade and fail ;

But never will my love for you.

NISA. I now know you are crazy.

Jose, no more of your nonsense, leave me ;

My mistress is coming. [Exit Jose.]

(Sola.) I wonder if the fellow is in earnest.

(Enter Blanche, who seats herself.)

BLANCHE. It is all over now.

Nisa, I could scarce ascend the stair-way ;

I am so faint ; to my chamber with me ;

I have excused myself for the evening.

After resting, a stroll in the garden

May refresh me. [Exeunt.]

SCENE 3.—The same. Apartment in Seffredi's Castle.

(Enter Seffredi and the Constable.)

SEFF. The fatigue of travel from Palermo
To my daughter's nerves hath given a shock,
And a fever induc'd which racks her brain.
The novel scenes through which she has just pass'd
Have doubtless her symptoms aggravated ;
And to recover her strength and spirits,
She begs that she may be left to enjoy
A night's repose, ere she meets her lord.
'Tis only a temporary ailment ;
To morrow she will be fully restor'd.

THE CONST. My lord, this message is most unwelcome ;

But my greatest grief is the necessity
That hath caused it. That my nuptial rights
Should be thus interrupted is nothing,
Compared to the knowledge of her suffering.
Tender her, I pray thee, my sympathy,
In this sad affliction, and my assent
To her request.

SEFF. My thanks, sir.

How wast thou pleased with the Prince's manner
At his coronation ?

THE CONST. The Prince seem'd to approach his new
honors

Well compos'd, with becoming dignity ;
His manner before receiving the crown
Chang'd, and then strange confusion assum'd ;
He was deeply agitated, my lord—
The cause I was unable to perceive.

SEFF. None others know the King so well as I.
The ambition of his father, Manfroi,

Made me the guardian of the young Prince
 And Don Pedro, both, then, of tender years.
 About the King were these, whose desire was,
 That the fate of Manfroï should befall them.
 Over their designs my counsel prevail'd.
 To my custody they were entrusted.
 The unfolding of the mind and temper
 Of each, his capacity and character,
 With a father's eye I have long observ'd.
 The young King is not without ambition,
 But he is generous and forgiving ;
 Frank and open-hearted in his dealings ;
 His aims he would attain without resort
 To indirect means, or secret intrigue.
 In these virtues Don Pedro is not his peer.
 Though endow'd with many noble traits.
 He is not so gentle and merciful ;
 Not so quick to forgive an enemy,
 Whose wrongs he hath felt, or inherited.
 In fine, Don Pedro would cherish revenge,
 And pursue his victim without remorse.
 Now, when Enriquez the hand of Constance
 Agreed to accept, Don Pedro's dark brow
 Still darker grew. Matilda's cruelty
 To his father rose in his memory,
 And stirr'd his blood ; the King observ'd this ;
 Hence his confusion.

CONST. Don Pedro's feelings were most natural ;
 But to show them then was most unseemly.

SEFF. True, but nothing, I feel well assured,
 Will come of this their friendship to disturb.—
 The hour warns me that it may be thy wish
 To retire and seek repose.

CONST. With thy consent, I will wait near the bed,
 Denied me now, hoping that my bride,
 Before the night is past, may be refresh'd,
 And permit my presence.

SEFF. This hope, I fear, will be without avail,
 But as thou likest ; a servant will hear
 The summons of this bell, shouldst thou want one,
 Before leaving, I will inquire of Blanche.

(Goes to Blanche's chamber door and knocks. Nisa
 enters.)

How is your Mistress resting ?

NISA. She is feverish still

SEFF. Let her be undisturb'd. If she awakes

And feels recover'd, so report to her lord,
 Who will remain in the ante-chamber,
 Hoping to have admission to her room
 Ere the night is past. Say this much to her.
[Exit Nisa.]

(To the Constable)
 I now bid thee good night ; on this divan
 Thou mayst recline ; and if thou wouldst read,
 To beguile the slow hours, here are some books
 That may serve thee. [Exit Seff.]

CONST. (Solus) What a strange situation ! Was e'er
 bride-groom
 Thus denied the sweet presence of his bride,
 At the hour when Hymen gives his first kiss,
 And his secret of new transports reveals?
 Being her request, how could I refuse ?
 How slow the hours will lift their drowsy wings,
 Till the dawn of the happy morrow appears !
 (Seats himself on divan and reads. Curtain falls.)

SCENE 4.—The same. Ante-chamber of Blanche's
 Apartments.

(Constable reclining on divan asleep—lamp dimly
 burning. Enters King Enriquez by secret door and
 moves towards Blanche's chamber—calling her name in
 a low voice. The Constable springs to his feet, and
 drawing his sword, engages with King Enriquez, who
 retreats through the door he entered. The Constable
 turns on the light, and tries the doors, which he finds
 locked. He rings the bell, and takes his stand in the
 door of the hall leading to Leontio's apartments. A
 servant enters.)

CONST. Some person entered the room while I slept.
 (Searches the room with servant.)

Perhaps I was deceived—thou mayst retire.
 Bid thy master come immediately. (Exit servant.)
 (Leontio Seffredi enters.)

SEFF. My lord, what has disturbed thee?

CONST. While I slept some one entered this chamber.

SEFF. Impossible, Sir; were not the doors lock'd?

CONST. They were.

SEFF. How then could any person enter here?

CONST. Sir, I cannot tell, but this I do know:
 I heard a voice and beheld a man's shape.

We crossed swords, Sir.

SEFF. Cross'd swords? Surely, my lord, thou wast
 dreaming;

A phantom this, a figment of the brain.
 Such cheats have occur'd before; the senses
 Enthrall'd by sleep, the imagination bears sway,
 And conjures up illusions that deceive.
 Thy exclusion from the bridal chamber
 Hath work'd up thy mind to this false state.
 Knowing the cause—having my word for that,
 Why take the matter so sadly to heart?
 Think of it—Blanche's age and situation;
 Rear'd in solitude, without a mother
 To teach her the secrets of womanhood—
 Suddenly wed to one nigh a stranger;
 To shrink from his embrace is natural,
 Tho' she were in fullest vigor of health.
 Maidens of gentle blood and chaste thoughts,
 Before they feel the glowing warmth of love,
 Must be woo'd with pressing assiduity.
 Let me entreat thee to calm thy feelings;
 The suspense that annoys thee will soon end.
 Treat Blanche tenderly, with confidence,
 And thou wilt have a loving companion.
 Of the foes that wedded life encounters,
 Jealousy, 'bove all, stands prominent.
 Beware, my lord, of its first whispers.
 To a wife's honor such a scene as this
 May do injury. That it was a dream
 Which disturbed thee—the merest phantom—
 Thou must know; then, to thy chamber retire,
 And compose thyself to rest, I pray thee.

THE CONST. That 'twas no dream, three of my senses
 prove,
 But still, a phantom it may have been,
 But in bod'ly form. I'm at your service. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE 2.—The same. Garden of Seffredi's Castle.
 (Enter Blanche and Nisa)

BLANCHE. O, what a contrast to my throbbing heart
 Is this quiet scene! In the moon's soft light
 These sweet flowers in security sleep,
 As if conscious of her tender vigils.
 Kiss'd by the morrow's sun they will awake,
 And open their eyes smiling to the skies.
 Alas! for me the present hath no rest,
 And no morrow's sun will rise to chase
 Away the dark clouds that o'erhang the future.
 The future! I shudder to speak the word.
 But yesterday, the green earth and bright sky

Pictur'd only hope, and joy, and love.
 How chang'd ! Desolation where'er I turn.
 A few hours I may call my own — and then;
 Then, O, what a destiny ! misery !
 The word is too poor; it hath no meaning
 To fathom the deep sea of my despair.
 Sainted mother ! if in the spirit land
 Pity is felt, and before mercy's throne
 Intercession for mortals may be made,
 On suppliant knee let thy child's name be breath'd;
 Ask that she be endow'd with strength to bear
 This affliction, or find escape in death.
 O could I weep once more ! but e'en this joy
 Is now denied me. The fountain of tears
 Hath no vent for a sorrow deep as mine.

(Enters King Enriquez by secret passage.)

KING ENR. Fair Blanche ! in thy face I see signs of
 grief;

Ere I am judg'd, I beseech thee to hear me.
 Thou hast witness'd a scene that condemns me.
 But hear me, and what wears the face of guilt
 Will in other light appear, and my love
 Be clear'd of ev'ry suspicion and doubt.
 'Twas thy father, and not I, who did this.

(Blanche turns away from him.)

What ! can I not calm thy troubled bosom
 By assuring thee of my devotion,
 And off'ring proof of my sincerity ?
 Do my words fall heedlessly on thine ear ?
 For thee, my crown, my life is now at stake;
 And thou wilt not trust me ?

BLANCHE. My lord, thy speech is unseasonable;
 Henceforth, our destinies are separate.

KING ENR. What cruel words !
 Whose hand will dare attempt to divide us ?
 Let all Sicily be first wrapp'd in flames.

BLANCHE. Thy broken vows had best be forgotten.
 To renew them can be of no avail;
 I am married to the Constable.

KING ENR. Married to the Constable ? What hast
 thou done !
 Thy credulity hath blasted my hopes,
 And thyself undone.

BLANCHE. Wouldst thou have me discredit my own
 eyes,
 And deny what I heard thy lips pronounce ?

Did I not hear thy pledge to another,
 In the presence of thy nobility?
 Has she not received their homage as Queen?
 The temptation thou couldst not withstand.
 Thou hast exchange'd thine honor for a crown.
 Thou wast right; I had no claim on thy hand,
 Much less to a throne; but to deceive me;
 To encourage my vanity with false hopes,
 Even after I trembled at my folly,
 Feeling that I had cherish'd a passion
 That to my happiness might prove fatal;
 O, this was too cruel! Would to heaven
 That my fears had not been dissipated
 By thy protests and words of endearment!
 Fortune, then, I might have accused, not thee;
 Then, my heart would have been thine, tho' my hand
 Were another's. But thou hast sealed my fate.
 It is too late now to acquit thyself;
 Mine honor bids me quit thy presence,
 And— forever. (*Blanche retires.*)

KING ENR. Stop, Madam; do not drive me to despair;
 For thy charms I would sacrifice the throne,
 Which thou sayest I have preferr'd to thee;
 Without their radiance 'twould have no lustre.

BLANCHE. (*Still retiring.*) The sacrifice would be of
 no avail;

These transports of passion are idle now.
 If in the past I have betrayed my love,
 'Twas the weakness of an innocent heart.
 Now, I have the strength to stifle its throbs,
 And let thee know, that the Constable's wife
 Will not be thy mistress, tho' thou art King.

(*Exeunt Blanche and Nisa.*)

KING ENR. (*Solus.*) Ah! cruel maid! to deny me
 audience,

As a perjured villain, who hath played false
 With thy precious love, now forever lost!
 The Constable's wife! thou base Leontio!
 Thy hand hath done this; thy coward heart
 Didst plot this thing to secure me a throne,
 And thyself a place, dreading the chances
 Of losing both, if I chose the King's will
 To reject, and Constantia's hand refuse.
 By the Gods, I will; and defy thy power.
 Thou shalt know that Enriquez is now King;
 That thy meshes of fraud cannot bind him

To the base act thou wouldst have him perform.
 Wed Constantia ! never ! This fix'd resolve
 No power on earth can shake ; it shall stand,
 Though war's bloody locks in my face be shook.

(*Exit.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.—Palermo. Apartment in the King's palace.
 (Enter King Enriquez and Seffredi.)

SEFF. If your majesty would deign an answer,
 I beg to ask what is the Constable's crime?
 What hath caused his arrest?

KING ENR. What if I should tell thee, conspiracy?

SEFF. Conspiracy? to what end?

KING ENR. Against my throne.

SEFF. Sire, this cannot be true. To false rumor,
 Or tongue of malice, thou hast given ear.
 His alliance with my house is sufficient
 His loyalty to put above suspicion.

KING ENR. His alliance with thy house! What
 meanest thou?

SEFF. By marriage.

KING ENR. Aye! an alliance, forc'd by thy power,
 Against the will of its helpless victim.

SEFF. And the cause of the Constable's arrest,
 May be. I so view it.

KING ENR. Since thou art so free thy thoughts to
 utter,

I will be so with thee ; thou hast play'd false ;
 My confidence abus'd, my peace destroy'd ;
 And for what? To secure thy place at court.
 For this thou has sacrific'd thine own child ;
 Blighted the sweetest love that on this earth
 Ever blossom'd : such as thy heart never felt
 In warmest mood ; Sir, thou art a murderer ;
 Worse than the bold bandit of the mountains,
 Or him that whets the dagger of revenge.
 After this act, how darest thou face me ?

SEFF. Ah ! Sire, my motives thou hath misconceiv'd,
 Or thou wouldst not speak to me in this wise.
 In accepting the will of thy uncle,
 'Twas not place I sought, but thy security.

KING ENR. It is not accepted ; its terms I spurn.
 Thy schemes are vain, the crown of Sicily
 Is mine, but Constantia never shall be ;
 No ! never.

SEFF. Having solemnly accepted her hand
Before the whole Kingdom, then reject it?

KING ENR. If they be deceived, thou art the de-
ceiver.

Thy cunning put her name in the paper,
Where thy daughter's was intended, and thus
Attempt was made to defeat my purpose.
What right hadst thou thus to practice on me?
Hast thou forgotten who Constantia is?
The daughter of the cruel Matilda,
Who, regardless of the ties of kindred,
From my father the sweat of torture wrung ;
And I espouse her? Never, Leontio.
Before thou seest the torch of these nuptials,
Thou wilt see all Sicily wrapt in flames.

SEFF. First in thy thoughts should be the public
weal,

And to that all thy aims subordinate.
By King Roger's will, the crown comes to thee,
Upon condition—that broken, thy kingdom
Will be rent into two rival factions,
And thy subjects in civil war embroil'd.
Surely, thou wilt not do them this evil.

KING ENR. King Roger had no right to make condi-
tions.

Did he succeed to the throne by such terms?
I claim no title by the late King's will.
By blood, I am rightful heir to the crown;
Hence, this condition, I affirm, is void.
My pledge to Constantia was involuntary,
And, therefore, not binding on my conscience.
Should Don Pedro, by accepting the will,
Aspire to the throne, and hope to mount it,
Without the cost of blood, how mistaken!
Leontio, my life is staked on this die.

SEFF. Your majesty's mind, I see, is resolv'd,
At least till a calmer mood shall return ;
But grant to me, I pray thee, the favor
Of the Constable's liberty ; my pledge
Will stand for his loyalty.

KING ENR. For what in the past thou hast done
for me,
This much I grant thee ; then go to Belmonte ;
He will follow thee.

SEFF. My most grateful thanks ; farewell !

[Exit Seff.]

KING ENR. (Solus.) In motive, Leontio may be sincere,
 And my speech to him too abrupt and harsh.
 Be that as it may, his purpose shall fail.
 I will see Blanche again ; another appeal
 May reach her heart, and convince her at last,
 That I have not deceived her. [Exit.

SCENE 2—The same. The Castle.

(Enter Don Alva, Gov'nor of the Castle and a turnkey.)

DON A. Unlock the Constable's cell.
 (Turnkey unlocks cell. Enter the Constable. Exit Turnkey.)

THE CONST. My dear friend !
 In my distress this call is most welcome.
 How glad I am to see thee !

DON A. The tidings of thy arrest surpris'd me :
 The reason assign'd my wonder excited.
 The charge of treason is mere invention ;
 This all Palermo knows ; hence the tumult
 Which threatens it. But what think'st thou the
 cause ?

CONST. I have suspicion only, which to thee
 Even, I will not breathe ; lock'd in my breast
 It shall remain, till by proof confirmed ;
 Till then, my heart alone it shall torture.
 But give me liberty to-night, and ere
 Another's sun, I will make known to thee
 The cause of my disgrace. If the truth be
 As I have grounds to suspect, vengeance
 My wrongs will follow, swift as the lightning,
 And terrible as its death-dealing shaft.

DON AL. The King hath promised thy discharge.

CONST. Promised my discharge ! to whom ?

DON A. Leontio.

CONST. He will not to-night—
 Wilt thou not anticipate the order ?

DON A. Thou must be on hand when the order arrives.

CONST. For that take my word.
 I will return here before dawn of day.

DON A. With that pledge, thy liberty is granted.

CONST. I will not deceive thee.

DON A. I will lock the door and take the key ;
 Go at once to the foot of the stairway,
 And there await me. [Exit Const.

(Enter Turnkey.)

I have already locked the cell.

TURNKEY. The key !

DON A.—I will return here to-night. [Exeunt.

SCENE 3.—The same. Duke of Palermo's House.
(Enter Duke of Palermo, Don Pedro Pinares, Don Alva, and Don Miguel.)

D. PALERMO. At Leontio's request,
I have invited you here, counsel to take
On the dangers which threaten the Kingdom.
The King has inaugurated his reign
By an act of tyranny, which demands
Prompt action, or there will be no safety
For his liege subjects, their persons or lives.
I will not assume to be counsellor
For wiser heads, their judgments to control.
Good Leontio will soon be with us ;
He has thought it wise, Don Pedro to sound
On this grave matter, and report to-night.

PINARES. Don Pedro !
What can Leontio from the Infante hope ?

D. PAL. Should Enriquez refuse Constantia's hand,
As it is believed he will, Don Pedro,
By accepting it, would be successor.

PINA. Is it believed that the Prince will prove
Faithless, and refuse to wed the Princess ?

D. PAL. I am assured he will.
Constantia will never share the King's bed.

PINA. If this be true my allegiance I abjure ;
Loyalty is not due a perjurd King.

D. PAL. It hath transpired,
The Constable's arrest hath a meaning,
Other than offence against the public.

(Enters Seffredi.)

My lord, most welcome ;
Our good friends their fidelity have proved
By prompt attendance at thy call.

SEFF. And for this my kindest thanks they all have.
(To Alva.) How fares the Constable ?

DON A. To Belmonte he hath gone.
Upon pledge of his honor to return
Before dawn of day, I have released him.

SEFF. To Belmonte ?
Of thy friendship this is strong proof ;
Whether good or evil may come of it,
Is another question ; but of one thing

Thou may'st rest assur'd—his pledge he'll redeem.
 And now, good friends, let us to the matter
 That hath brought us here : the exigency
 Admits of no delay; all Palermo
 Is seething with the fires of discontent,
 Like our own Mount Ætna, giving signs
 Of eruption from her smoky summit.
 The young King's madness, scorning all restraint,
 Incites to revolt and revolution.
 The question his subjects have to meet,
 Is, shall they be victims of civil war,
 Or, to prevent it, be shorn of power?
 No King ever fell heir to a sceptre
 Under such auspices of security,
 And against fortune so recklessly play'd.

PINA. The Constable's arrest seems most unjust ;
 Dost thou know the cause ?

SEFF. Without doubt I do.
 The King is enamour'd of my daughter,
 Who has been married to the Constable,
 Which hath inflam'd his heart with jealousy,
 And prompted him to commit this outrage.
 I have conversed with him ; he denies it not.
 But in this, all, perhaps, are more concern'd ;—
 He swears that he will not wed Constantia ;
 That he holds his crown, not under the will,
 But by inheritance as rightful heir.
 Had you to his violent speech listen'd,
 His transports of unbridled rage witness'd,
 You would know how determin'd in purpose
 His passion hath made him.

D. PALERMO. The only course then left us to pursue,
 Is to repudiate him as rightful King.

PINARES. But will Don Pedro accept Constantia,
 And thus legitimate his title ?

SEFF. He will ;
 About this we have just had a conference.

PINARES. His pledge should be given ere we resolve
 The perils of this move to undertake.
 His promise to accept Constantia's hand,
 Should be precedent to any action.

SEFF. He commission'd me to make you this pledge,
 And that in person he will renew it
 Before you separate. I go to Belmonte.
 Don Louis, Chamberlain to our late King,
 Who hath our secret, and is my true friend,

By understanding between us, to you
 A message will send, should the King to-night
 Leave the palace, as I believe he will.
 In that event, why not seize the moment
 To capture it? But upon that you decide.
 In your wisdom I confide. (*Exit Seffredi.*)

D. PALERMO. In times of tumult, to know when to
 strike—

To seize the golden moment of fortune,
 And give to events their decisive turn,
 Is a high quality. (*Enters Don Pedro.*)

My lord :

Your counsel we need in the weighty things
 Before us, and are glad of your presence.
 If, my lord, you have an opinion form'd,
 Give it; it may, perhaps, our minds decide.

DON PEDRO. Seffredi was charg'd by me to announce
 That my brother having broken the will
 Of the late King, the right devolves on me
 To assert my claim to the vacant throne,
 Should I choose the condition to accept,
 Which requires marriage to Constantia.
 To save the State from riot and tumult,
 This condition I agree to accept,
 If it be the public will ; that I leave
 For your better judgment to determine.

D. PALERMO. The question, then is narrowed to this:
 Shall we resolve to strike the decisive blow?
 The temper of our troops, it is well known,
 Is in accord with us.

DON ALVA. For myself and my command, I answer.
 They will follow where I lead.

DON MIGUEL. So do I answer for my command.

PINARES. I answer for myself.

D. PALERMO. Then we have decided.

(*Enter servant with letter for D. Palermo, who opens
 it and reads.*)

The King has left the palace and taken the way to
 Belmonte.

DON ALVA. The time, then has arrived to use our
 arms,
 And not our tongues. Let us to the palace.

DON MIGUEL. And to Belmonte;
 To seize the tyrant in this foul attempt
 To seduce a faithful wife, and disgrace
 One of Sicily's noblest sons.

D. PALERMO. With Miguel I will go to Belmonte.
You, Don Alva, make sure of the palace,
And the castle.

DON PEDRO. I will be with him.

PINARES. I will to the palace too.

D. PALERMO. Then our parts are known;
May quick success crown our undertaking.
God save the Kingdom! (*Exeunt.*)

ACT V.

SCENE 1.—Belmonte.

(*Enter Jose and Nisa.*)

JOSE. What I saw with my own eyes I did see.

NISA. Well, what did you see?

JOSE. I was at the gate op'ning in the park:
And a horseman, muffled up in his cloak,
Came dashing toward me, but my figure,
Or some other object, caus'd him to halt.
He then turned, and at full speed rode away,
And was lost to my sight beyond the wood.

NISA. If seen again, would you know his features?

JOSE. Of that I am not sure.
Of late, so many strange things have happen'd
To raise my wonder, that its pitch is now
So high, that certainty in anything
I have reason to doubt; I am not sure
That Jose is now talking with his love.

NISA. Nor I.
What else has occur'd that was strange to you?

JOSE. I have seen nothing beside.
But my ears, if they be not false to me,
Bear testimony to mysterious sounds,
Which forebode something, good or bad;
Time will show.

NISA. What sounds have you heard?

JOSE. Sighs and groans, mingled with the clash of
swords,
Upon the midnight air.

NISA. What think you they portend?

JOSE. I am neither prophet nor interpreter.
But tell me, Nisa, where is the Constable?
'Twas strange in him to quit his bride so soon,
Ere he caught the first blush of wedded bliss;
I don't understand it.

NISA. I don't suppose you ever will.

JOSE. But do you?

NISA. How could I? I have never been married.

JOSE. Then suppose you get the key to the secret.

NISA. Where would I get it?

JOSE. In me; marry me, and then you'll have the key

To unlock it.

NISA. Marry you! What do I want with you?

JOSE. Try me, and you'll soon the secret know.

NISA. O, pshaw! get you gone;

You always make a farce of serious things.

I am in no humor now for this trifling;

I am thinking of my poor mistress.

JOSE. And I am thinking of mine—my dear one.

NISA. Jose, cease your silly talk, and leave me.

JOSE. Adieu, my love, and pleasant dreams to thee.

(Exit Jose.)

NISA. (Sola.) How his frivolity led him away

From the line of speech he set out on!

Who could he have seen approach the park gate?

Not the Constable. Why should he avoid

Being seen, and not enter the castle?

Ah! me; these are not vain imaginings

That have disturbed Jose! Realities

Oftimes dispatch ahead their heralds

To make announcement of their dread coming.

Of late, a strange feeling, akin to fear—

Call it what you will—hath worked upon me,

And makes me startle at my own shadow,

As if some unseen power were present,

To do me harm, or to harm those I love.

Last night my old mistress' picture fell down

From the wall; a cat jumping through the window,

O'eturned a vase of flowers pluck'd by mistress.

And I dreamed that the fountain in the park

Ran blood; and I saw a father weeping

Over a new made grave. (Bell strikes.)

That is my mistress' signal. (Exit.)

SCENE 2.—The same. Seffredi's Castle. Blanche's Chamber.

(Enter Nisa, and immediately afterwards King Enriquez by secret passage.)

KING ENR. Thy mistress, Where is she?

NISA. She will soon be here.

O, my lord, how her heart is wrung with grief!

KING ENR. Is it true then, she is married?

NISA. Yes, as far as the Priest's ceremony goes.

KING ENR. What meanest thou?

NISA. Since then, she has not seen the Constable.

KING ENR. Dost thou speak the truth, or to assuage
my grief

Hast thou invented this tale?

NISA. 'Tis truth if ever I spake it.
She did plead illness and was excused
To seek repose alone, and afterward,
You met us in the garden; she hath not
Seen the Constable since. Rumor hath it,
That most urgent business hurried him off
To Palermo.

KING ENR. (Aside.) Now thanks to heaven!
Her virgin charms remain unspotted still!

(Enter Blanche. Exit Nisa.)

Dearest Blanche!

BLANCHE. If thou hast any regard for my fame,
Leave me, I pray; I am no longer Blanche.
I am a wife; all that is left to me
Is mine honor; wouldst thou rob me of that?
Then, I entreat thee, leave me to my fate.

KING ENR. Thy honor is dearer to me than life;
I would save thee from the misery
That impends over thee, without dishonor.
To do this I come. List to me, dear Blanche!
Thy marriage was a fraud, a mockery;
Not being consummated, it is void;
It shall be so decreed. Thou shalt not be
Sacrificed on this unholy altar.
Thou shalt yet be made happy in my love,

BLANCHE. With these treach'rous hopes deceive not
thyself.

If it be any solace to thy heart,
I love thee still; and the doubts I have felt
Of thy love, which caused me to upbraid thee
With inconstancy, I no longer feel;
But Enriquez, what cruel fate hath done
'Tis too late to repair; forget my name;
Blot out the past, or let it linger only
A sweet memory. Thine I can never be.

KING ENR. O, these words recall!
They stop the pulsations of my heart's blood
And curdle it on my brain.

BLANCHE. Flee from me; thine own glory is at stake,
And my reputation.

(By a gesture Blanche overturns the candlestick, and goes to another room to relight the taper, and returns. At this moment the Constable enters, drawing his sword.)

CONSTABLE. Tyrant?

This affront to me cannot be endured.

KING ENR. Traitor!

The affront avenge, if thou darest.

(They engage. The Constable falls. Blanche attempts to support him. The Constable plunges his sword into her bosom.)

CONST. Die, unfaithful woman! My misfortune
Thy charms shall not bestow upon another.

I die satisfied. (Dies.)

Enter Seffredi and Nisa.

(King Enriquez offers assistance to Blanche.)

BLANCHE. Spare thyself this care.

May Heaven's wrath, with my blood be appeas'd,
And thy reign be prosperous and happy. (Dies.)

KING ENR. Leontio! look on the work of thy hands;

Thy vain attempt to extinguish the flame,

That with celestial fire animated

Two loving hearts. See it in that pale face,

Whose smiles were the sweet sunlight of my soul;

In those silent lips, whose words fell on mine ear,

Like angel's voices whisp'ring peace and joy;—

Thou hast done this.

(Enter Duke of Palermo, Don Miguel and Cavaliers.)

D. PALER. In the name of thy nobility,

And the people, we come to arrest thee;

I demand thy sword.

KING ENR. Traitor and conspirator!

My sword I will give thee, but not the hilt.

(They engage.)

DON MIGUEL. Hold! not thus.

KING ENR. (Falling.) Leontio:

This conspiracy, too, is thine. Poor Blanche!

Thy sad fate reconciles me to my own.

What earth hath denied, heaven will grant.

We shall meet again. (Dies.)

ERRATA.

In line six, Scene 1, Act II, Don Alva for "Don Alfonso."

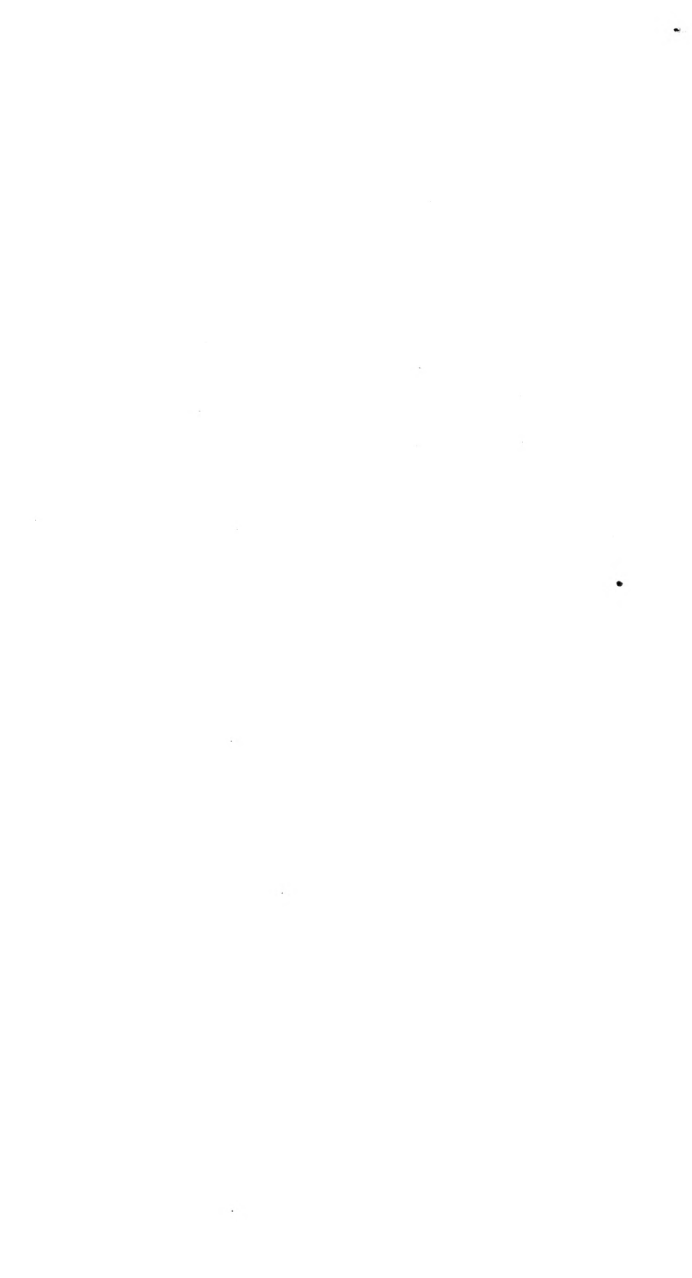
Page 7, line first, Scene 2 for "Scene 11."

Page 19, line twenty-three, pre-eminent for "prominent."

Page 19, Scene 5 for Scene 2.

Page 20, line sixteen, omit words "secret passage."

Page 21, line thirty-eight, chance for "chanecs."



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